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Chairman: Mr. Faati (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Gambia)

Contents

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

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In the absence of Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Mr. Faati (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/61/41, and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/61/207, A/61/275, A/61/275/Corr.1 and A/61/299)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/61/270)

Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

1. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/61/275), said that, over the past year, considerable progress had been made to promote the application of internationally recognized protection standards to children affected by armed conflict, including the establishment of a monitoring and reporting system. However, further efforts were needed to ensure that impunity for crimes against children during times of conflict was not tolerated. It was encouraging to note that since the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, eight additional countries had ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. She urged those Member States that had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to consider doing so.

2. She highlighted section II of the report, touched on the strategic plan of her Office in section IV and noted that with the end of the first phase of implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) the geographical scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be broadened to all situations where grave violations were being perpetrated against children in armed conflict.

3. She hoped that the annual omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, especially the segment on children and armed conflict, would reflect the recommendations contained in section VII of the report.

4. In the past, all combatants had created a humanitarian space for the protection of children. Tragically, the world had entered an era where the basic principles of international humanitarian law were being called into question and little distinction was made between civilians and combatants. All Member States and non-State actors were urged to abide by internationally recognized rules of war so that children would be protected in times of conflict.

5. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said it was disturbing that certain bodies had attempted to usurp the mandate of the General Assembly and had turned the protection of children into a politicized and selective process. In his view, States should be involved in the drafting of reports. In that regard, he wished to know what sources of information the Special Representative had used in the preparation of her report. Turning to paragraph 14 and the reference to a "deliberate strategy of humiliation and ethnic cleansing", he noted that, while there was a humanitarian crisis in Darfur, that crisis was being caused by the parties that had not signed the peace agreement. The Special Representative should therefore revise the paragraph, since its contents were biased, politicized and unspecific.

6. His delegation rejected any linkage between Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and the issue of children and armed conflict. In that regard, it should be borne in mind that Security Council and General Assembly deliberations were separate. Finally, his delegation was against the targeting of specific States and regretted the fact that the report highlighted negative rather than positive information. It was also disappointed that the report failed to address the problem of post-conflict management.

7. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, sought further clarification regarding the role of the General Assembly in mainstreaming children and armed conflict in the United Nations system. She wondered whether there was a need for more "time-bound action plans" to ensure the implementation of standards on the ground and, if so, what the most appropriate tools at the national level would be. Finally, she would appreciate further information regarding the implementation of the strategic framework in the promotion of rights-based protection for children.

8. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said it was disappointing that the Special Representative's report had

not provided more details on the sufferings of the Palestinian children living under foreign occupation. Her delegation had repeatedly called upon the Office of the Special Representative to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory and witness first-hand the systematic human rights violations committed by Israel. It would therefore like the Special Representative to indicated how she planned to address the situation.

9. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that she agreed with the representative of the Sudan regarding the central role of the General Assembly, recalling that the mandate for her Office originated with that body. However, it was important to bear in mind that there were other forums for action such as the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court and United Nations agencies. With respect to the participation of Member States in the drafting of reports, her Office had instituted a new policy whereby the contents of all reports were shared with Member States before the final report was issued.

10. As regarded Darfur, a separate report on the Sudan had been submitted to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The information in that report had been verified by actors on the ground, including United Nations agencies. As for the "deliberate strategy" mentioned in paragraph 14, while the main actors in the Darfur situation were non-State actors, it was also a well-known fact that some of those non-State actors had close associations with the Sudanese Government. The representative of the Sudan should rest assured that there was no linkage between the Office of the Special Representative and the monitoring and reporting process called for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The only political agenda concerning the Office was the protection of children.

11. Finally, she agreed that not enough attention was being paid to the post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Clearly, there was a need for the United Nations system to move beyond the naming and shaming exercise and develop a sustained involvement so that countries could recover from post-conflict situations.

12. In response to the question from the representative of Finland, she said that continued General Assembly support for the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative would ensure that it examined all situations of concern. With regard to action plans, her Office and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were considering establishing a checklist of specific actions that countries must take in order to make the transition from conflict to demobilization. The Office was indeed concerned about rights-based promotion at the field level, in particular with respect to girl and internally displaced children. In future, the Office planned to focus more on research and hoped to begin a ten-year evaluation study in 2007, provided that funds became available. Lastly, she planned to visit Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in November 2006.

13. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) said that his delegation looked forward to the midterm review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Upon the establishment of the mechanism, it had been agreed that it would be limited to African situations. It was hoped that its scope would be expanded to cover all aspects, so that the international community would be apprised of the facts on the ground and, in particular, the plans to move to the next phase, namely the implementation of sanctions.

14. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that, while her delegation supported certain priority areas outlined in the Special Representative's report, including measures addressing the needs of girls and internally displaced and refugee children, it felt that future reports should focus on frozen and protracted conflict situations and their impact on children.

15. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that, while his delegation was willing to cooperate with the Special Representative and welcomed her decision to visit the Sudan, it was displeased, as noted earlier, at being singled out in paragraph 14. Negative and inaccurate statements merely delayed the peace process.

16. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) expressed agreement with the representative of Azerbaijan on the need to ensure sustained livelihoods for persons in protracted and post-conflict situations. However, her Office had focused on the immediate need to demobilize child soldiers and punish perpetrators because of the gravity of the situation. It had initiated a dialogue with the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations

Development Programme on protracted and post-conflict situations and hoped to accomplish more in that area in the future.

17. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, said that the European Union attached great importance to the worldwide implementation of the objectives of "A World Fit for Children". States which had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols were urged to do so. The European Union remained concerned about the large number of reservations to the Convention. Reservations, especially those incompatible with the object and purpose of the treaties, should be withdrawn or their scope limited.

18. The European Union continued to work closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and with UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other actors, including non-governmental organizations, to ensure better protection for all children. Cooperation of that kind was essential.

19. She hoped the report of the Secretary-General on violence against children, with its accompanying recommendations to States, the United Nations system and civil society, would bring about necessary action at all levels to protect children against all forms of physical and psychological violence.

20. On the question of child labour, the report reminded its readers that children should not even be in the workplace. There was much to be done to improve the situation of the 200 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 who were still working in 2004, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), and especially those working in extremely hazardous conditions. An ILO report entitled "The end of child labour: Within reach" recorded some recent improvement in the numbers, which had fallen by about 11 per cent over a four-year period, and by 25 per cent in the case of children engaged in the worst forms of child labour. The European Union encouraged States, as a matter of priority, to sign and ratify the ILO Conventions concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and on elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

21. Of special concern were the 1.2 million children who became victims of trafficking of children each year, according to the ILO. Many of them were forced into commercial sexual exploitation or other forms of labour. According to a current UNICEF report, "The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and invisible", exploited children were prevented by their abusers from making their situation known. The European Union was combating trafficking through international and regional forums, legislation and funding programmes.

22. Welcoming the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, she urged States to criminalize and penalize effectively all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and to address the needs of the children concerned and the root causes of the problem. States were encouraged to consider signing and ratifying the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

23. The European Union supported initiatives to raise awareness of the plight of children exploited in armed conflicts, including the follow-up to the Security Council's request to the Secretary-General to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the use of child soldiers. The European Union was considering ways of implementing that resolution through its own European Security and Defence Policy operations. It was committed to cooperating actively with the newly appointed United Nations Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict. States were urged to speed up their ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, whereby sexual violence and the enlistment of children under 15 to the armed forces were categories of war crime. All perpetrators of crimes against children in armed conflicts must be brought to justice, with special attention to the situation of girls.

24. She commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to address sexual exploitation and abuse affecting staff and related personnel of the United Nations. Member States and troop-contributing countries had a special

responsibility to train and hold accountable members of national contingents. The European Union was committed to combating the problem through action of its own, especially the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict and the involvement of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The European Union had its own programmes aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including back-to-school and anti-trafficking initiatives and psychosocial support.

25. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), expressed the full support of SADC for the establishment of the mechanism of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. SADC Governments had incorporated the goals of "A World Fit for Children" into their national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies, and were continuously working to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration. They placed special emphasis on children's development needs and on the provision of quality education and health services, and on implementing national laws and policies to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. The SADC Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children, and the SADC Charter on Fundamental Social Rights, guaranteed the individual rights enshrined in the relevant international instruments. A SADC Protocol on Cooperation in Education and Training supplemented national efforts at providing quality education, for which the United Nations and other partners were providing welcome and very necessary support.

26. The 1999 SADC Protocol on Health played a crucial role in the attainment of acceptable standards of health for children. Together with UNICEF and other partners, SADC Member States were working to put in place sustainable immunization campaigns against poliomyelitis, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. The campaigns had helped to sensitize people to the importance of primary health care, but must be followed up by meaningful investment in the health sector. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had resulted in a growing number of orphans and infected children. He appealed to cooperating partners to continue supporting efforts within SADC to fight the pandemic, in the light of commitments made during the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

27. Children were always among the first to be affected by armed conflicts. The advances made in applying the international standards and norms to protect them must be consolidated. Much more must be done to address the problem of child soldiers, and more resources invested in conflict prevention and resolution.

28. Among the major concerns of SADC was trafficking in human beings, including children, within countries and across international borders. Regional and international human rights mechanisms must be further strengthened to deal with the problem. Attention should continue to be given to the protection of refugee children and other displaced children throughout the world.

29. SADC welcomed the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which should ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. He hoped it would be adopted by the General Assembly.

30. **Ms. Otani** (Japan) said that her country was fully committed to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children. The Government of Japan had made the promotion of human security an important pillar of its foreign policy. With the United Nations, it had decided to extend assistance amounting to $977,874 to the joint United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/World Health Organization (UNESCO/WHO) project on capacity-building for the psychological, pedagogical and medico-social rehabilitation of children and teachers in Chechnya. It was significant that children had contributed from their own experience to the report of the Independent Expert on violence against children. Her Government hoped that the information in the report would be widely disseminated and that all Member States would take urgent action to tackle violence against children. Japan was making great efforts to combat the increasing prevalence of child abuse and child prostitution. In 2001 it had hosted the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and in 2004 it had revised its legislation on child abuse and child welfare.

31. The world was increasingly aware of the problems of children affected by armed conflicts. Her Government welcomed the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in five African countries, which she

hoped would provide objective and reliable information on the situation there. It was important to focus on assisting reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. In February 2006, Japan had provided assistance through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for such a reintegration project in the Great Lakes region and it would continue to work closely with other Member States, international organizations and civil society to improve the situation of children in armed conflict.

32. Many children were affected by natural disasters and excluded as a result from essential goods and services. In 2005 Japan had implemented a support plan for child victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami. The plan focused on child protection, including measures against human trafficking and to enable children to survive by combating infectious diseases. On the basis of its experience, Japan would seek to make further contributions in that area.

33. **Ms. Khatab** (Egypt) said that her country had been among the first 20 States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had played an active part in national, regional and international efforts to bring about the United Nations study on violence against children. Regional activities had been coordinated by the Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and a regional consultation meeting had been held in Cairo in June 2005. Countries in her region were committed to implementing the recommendations of the report of the Independent Expert. Egypt had its own National Committee to Eliminate Violence against Children, encompassing Government representatives, non-governmental organizations, media professionals, and leaders of opinion and religion. The Committee had agreed on a zero tolerance policy towards violence against children, and a national plan of action to eliminate all forms of violence against children had been adopted in 2006. Sincere efforts were being made to break the silence which had long surrounded certain forms of violence, such as early and forced marriages, domestic violence and female genital mutilation.

34. A Child Help Line had been launched in June 2005. It was a 24-hour service which could be accessed freely by any child in Egypt. Every complaint received the immediate and careful attention of trained professionals. Parents, teachers and professionals working with and for children now realized the value of listening to children and taking their views into account, in line with article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report of the Independent Expert on violence against children was now being translated into Arabic. Egypt supported the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, as recommended in the report. Violence against children living under occupation in Palestine and Lebanon should be given high priority in future action to implement its recommendations.

35. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that any kind of violence against children exacted great cost from society. It could result in lifelong social and health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anti-social and aggressive behaviour, impaired performance at school and later at work, and greater involvement in crime. The vision of safer communities for children required a multifaceted approach primarily based at national level, with strong support from the international community and the United Nations. Such an approach should focus on promoting an agenda for implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and especially for combating the major health risks such as HIV/AIDS; resolving conflicts, which had resulted in disability, exploitation, sexual violence and displacement among many thousands of children, including the enrolment of 250,000 children as child soldiers; effective measures to defeat malaria and other diseases and to reduce mortality among under fives through immunization and improved maternal health; and achieving the Millennium target for education, in a world where an estimated 150 million primary school-age children, including 62 million girls, were still out of school.

36. As a result of the South Asian regional consultation held in Islamabad in May 2005 in preparation for the study of the Independent Expert, there was now a South Asia Forum for Ending Violence against Children, with representatives from the eight countries in the region, and a group working on violence against children. The first meeting of the Forum, held in August 2006, had focused on early marriages and physical and psychological violence against children.

37. Pakistan had adopted several measures to eradicate violence against children and promote the rights of the child. It had amended its criminal law to outlaw early and forced marriages and was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),

the core conventions of ILO, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia and the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. It had a National Commission for Child Welfare and Development to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a national plan of action to address key issues of child protection. Corporal punishment and all forms of harsh treatment of children in schools had been banned. Education was free up to the tenth grade, and the literacy drive placed equal emphasis on girls. The national plan of action, called "Education for All" aimed for universal primary school enrolment by 2015. To encourage education for girls, special incentives such as free uniforms, textbooks and school meals were available. In the health sector, the immunization campaign now covered 77 per cent of children. In collaboration with ILO, the private sector and civil society, child labour had been eradicated in football manufacturing and in the carpet industry and efforts were being made to eradicate it from the manufacture of surgical products.

38. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the recommendations of the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children should be incorporated into national laws and used as a basis for international cooperation on that issue. Information gathering for the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be impartial and free from politicization. Special attention must be paid to the needs of children not only during armed conflicts but also in post-conflict situations. The Sudan's framework document, "A Sudan fit for children", which incorporated the goals of the 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children's final resolution on "A world fit for children", reflected the Sudan's commitment to the relevant Millennium Development Goals and to regional conventions on children. Care for children was a religious, national and humanitarian obligation. Child welfare in the Sudan was supervised by the National Council on Child Welfare in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and regional agencies. A children's parliament had been proposed as a platform for children to express their views and concerns and prepare them for future involvement in decision-making as adult citizens. He commended United Nations and regional agencies, in particular UNICEF, for their food, health and education programmes, and looked forward to greater international cooperation as a climate of peace was established in the south and Darfur. He expressed concern over the plight of Arab children under foreign occupation in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan and of Lebanese children following the vicious massacres perpetrated by Israel in Lebanon.

39. **Mr. Degia** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that investing in its children was one of the best investments a government could make; the future survival of mankind depended in fact on how the international community safeguarded the children of the world. He therefore commended the United Nations for its efforts to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child a universal instrument and to increase the capacity of States to implement the provisions of the Convention.

40. The situation of children nevertheless continued to be a source of great concern, as shown in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/61/270). The failure of many States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals was to a considerable extent the result of structural problems such as an unfair and unequal international trading system and a lack of democracy and transparency in the international financial and economic systems. Unless those problems were resolved, the developing world would continue to lag behind the developed world and children would suffer the most.

41. In order to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the next ten years must be years of implementation and collective mobilization. He therefore commended the Secretary-General for recommending a number of additional targets which would facilitate the monitoring of progress towards achieving those Goals. Although developing countries bore primary responsibility for their development, national efforts must be complemented by a supportive international system, including improved global governance, greater coherence in United Nations operations and a greater voice for the United Nations in global development policy. The commitments relating to increased financial resources for development made at the Gleneagles G-8 Summit in 2005 and at the World Summit 2005 must likewise be implemented and he urged the developed countries to meet the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance (ODA). Until globalization and

liberalization were made more inclusive and their benefits more equitably distributed, children would continue to suffer.

42. Underscoring the threat to development posed by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, he noted that in some areas of the world the effects of HIV/AIDS were reversing the gains made in the area of child mortality. The Caribbean Community countries had made the fight against that threat to their young people and their future a priority and he called for the allocation of more resources to that issue. He therefore welcomed the adoption of the Political Declaration on AIDS by the General Assembly in June 2006 and said the Declaration must be implemented as a matter of urgency.

43. The CARICOM countries were allocating whatever limited financial resources were available to combating HIV/AIDS; all member States had National AIDS Programmes aimed inter alia at reducing mother-to-child transmission and public education programmes had also been launched. The CARICOM countries considered education to be a fundamental right as well as a tool to increase awareness of AIDS, combat child labour and promote development. Throughout the region, primary and secondary education were free and in most cases attendance was mandatory between the ages of 5 and 16. Both boys and girls had equal access to education and sporting activities.

44. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria) expressed concern at the difficult situation of children in many parts of the world as depicted in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), stressed the urgent need to implement the recommendations made by the independent expert and expressed support for the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

45. Although promotion of the rights of the child was a shared responsibility of the international community, national governments bore the primary responsibility for providing the juridical framework needed to guarantee children's rights. His Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, adopted a Child Rights Act in 2003 and strengthened legal protections for children's rights in all the states of the federation. It had also adopted the Trafficking in Persons Act and established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking of Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP), which inter alia combated trafficking in children and child labour and operated a rehabilitation and reintegration programme for child victims of trafficking.

46. More than 65 million of Nigeria's population of 140 million were children and his Government, which considered education to be a basic human right as well as a development tool, had implemented the Universal Basic Education Programme, which guaranteed compulsory, free education for children up to the junior secondary level. A national health-care system which provided free medical facilities to children was also seen as an investment in the country's future. Children had the right to be heard on issues affecting their well-being; for example, the Nigerian Children's Parliament, inaugurated in 2000, met quarterly to discuss topical issues. In addition, on 27 May 2006, National Children's Day, the Parliament had organized a seminar on HIV/AIDS and children and presented an action plan to the President.

47. **Mr. Hatem** (Iraq) said that children who were aware of their rights as children would make better future citizens. Iraq was party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose principles had been incorporated into the new Iraqi Constitution; a committee had recommended Iraq's accession to the two Optional Protocols on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography. The transitional Government was focusing on primary health care, vaccination in rural areas and hospital capacity-building. By the end of the first quarter of 2006, over 150 new vaccination centres had been planned and during the two polio vaccination campaigns conducted in the summer of 2005 virtually all of the targeted 4.7 million children had been vaccinated.

48. The ministries of education and higher education had taken major steps to improve the education system, training tens of thousands of teachers, renovating thousands of schools and opening dozens of model schools, all of which had led to a noticeable increase in enrolment. There were many ongoing renovation projects in the university sector as well. However, the security situation continued to be a serious impediment to progress in those areas. He appealed to friendly nations and international organizations to help Iraq build a better future for the next generation.

49. **Mr. Sardenberg** (Brazil) said that no effort must be spared to ensure proper follow-up to the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. An important first step was to admit the problem existed and make a commitment to confront it. He agreed with the independent expert that no form of violence against children was acceptable, noting that his Government had established several hotlines to encourage reporting of violence against children, including sexual exploitation and pornography on the Internet. The police had also received special training in receiving complaints and prosecuting offences against children and adolescents. The juvenile justice system would be adapted to promote social reintegration by reducing rates of institutionalization through the use of community-based alternatives and by keeping families intact.

50. The Child Labour Eradication Programme, based on ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, provided stipends to families for keeping children in school and promoted after-school activities. As a result, the rate of child labour for the 5 to 9 and 10 to 17 age groups had dropped by 61 per cent and 36 per cent respectively between 1992 and 2004. The establishment of the Network to Combat Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents had led to the creation of centres for the care of children, adolescents and families exposed to sexual violence, especially in areas where trafficking occurred and in border areas. In addition, awareness campaigns had been undertaken, the hotline system had been strengthened and more training and resources had been provided to social workers. Teachers were also being trained to deal with such issues as violence, neglect, abandonment, abuse and exploitation.

51. His Government's response to violence against children was based on a public health approach. Medical personnel reported any suspected cases to the Guardianship Council for referral to the appropriate authorities and the Ministry of Health's Family Health Programme offered outreach services to prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, the Congress was considering a law to prohibit corporal punishment in the home. At the international level, his Government had recently hosted an expert meeting on the draft United Nations guidelines for the protection and alternative care of children without parental care.

52. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that his Government, which was committed to the rights of children, was a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. A separate ministry was devoted to the welfare of women and children and the National Policy on Children of 1994 enunciated the country's commitments, while the Primary Education Act of 1990 enshrined the right to education. Girls' education had been given the highest priority, with tuition fees for girls waived up to the twelfth grade. Gender parity had been achieved in the schools, the Government was currently focusing on improving the quality of education at all levels, with an emphasis on the inclusion of handicapped children in mainstream institutions. Child mortality and malnutrition had been reduced and maternal health improved. Polio had been eradicated and iodine deficiency was declining. Vitamin A supplements and oral rehydration therapy had saved millions of children's lives.

53. Children in Bangladesh nevertheless remained vulnerable as a result of poverty, trafficking, exploitation and violence. Capacities must be strengthened to address children's issues and his Government had identified four objectives: create opportunities for children's development, including through access to basic services; promotion of the best interests of the child in all situations; safety and security; protection of children's rights. A multi-sectoral approach would be used to meet those goals.

54. Child labour laws, especially the Children Act 1974 and the Children Rules 1976, were strictly enforced, including in the garment industry, and efforts to eliminate child labour in the informal sectors through non-formal education were under way. Other noteworthy initiatives included the "Appropriate Resources for Improvement of Street Children's Environment" (ARISE), a project undertaken by the Ministry of Welfare with the assistance of UNDP, the establishment of a parliamentary Standing Committee, to supervise women's and children's affairs and the designation of the decade 2001-2010 as the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh and the celebration of 30 September as "Girl Child Day".

55. At the regional level, Bangladesh had ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and was a signatory to the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare. He stressed the need to focus on the situation of children affected by armed conflict and the rights of children living under foreign occupation and to deal with the scourges of trafficking and violence. As the main sponsor of the annual resolution on the international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world, his delegation hoped that the draft resolution would enjoy wide support.

56. **Ms. Guo** Xiaomei (China) said that despite the progress achieved, many challenges remained in the protection of children's rights. The international community must enhance cooperation to promote children's rights and eliminate the root causes of violations of those rights. The developed countries in particular should assume a greater role and provide the developing countries with financial and technical help to create a favourable environment for the healthy growth of the world's children.

57. Chinese children represented one fifth of the world total and her Government was conscious of its obligation to its children. The domestic juridical framework for the protection of children's rights included the Constitution, the Civil Affairs Act, the Adoption Act, the Protection of Minors Act and the Compulsory Education Act. A nationwide system for children's affairs included all relevant government departments, with the Working Committee of the State Council on Women's and Children's Affairs playing a leading role. The current Ten-Year Programme of Development for Children 2001-2010 was aimed at meeting the commitments made at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children through concrete measures in such areas as health, education, legislation and the environment.

58. Further progress had been made in 2006. In September the revised Compulsory Education Act, containing provisions on optimal allocation of resources to ensure the balanced development of the educational system, had come into effect. A draft revision of the Protection of Minors Act had been submitted to the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in August. The draft enshrined the principles of putting children first and the best interests of the child and confirmed children's fundamental rights.

59. China had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, ratified the Optional Protocol to that Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and was considering ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It had also ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption.

60. In September 2005 the Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered the second periodic report of China; her Government was taking steps to implement the Committee's recommendations and was working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to follow up the Committee's consideration of the report. Her Government looked forward to continued fruitful cooperation with the Committee but urged the Committee to treat with caution information coming through various channels as such information could be misleading. Although China was undergoing a period of economic and social transition and there were still social problems, disparities and varying levels of development in the country, her Government would continue to join the international community in its efforts to build a world fit for children.

61. **Mr. Kirn** (Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network countries, as well as of South Africa, welcomed the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children as the first consolidated effort within the United Nations to shed light on that problem and to engage directly with children in that regard.

62. Violence against children was a violation of their basic human rights; remedying the root causes of that multidimensional phenomenon would require a systematic, coordinated and inclusive approach wherever violence occurred. Violence against children often remained hidden, due mainly to children's vulnerability and lack of power and voice. The establishment of adequate child-friendly and gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms was therefore crucial.

63. Violence had long-term consequences for the health and development of children and for their chances of leading a normal life. Child victims of violence also were more likely to show violent behaviour as adults. Follow-up to the report must therefore be effective. Since violence against children

existed everywhere an effective multisectoral response was essential, with strong and coordinated leadership, first and foremost by governments. The issue of violence against children must remain high on the international agenda and all possibilities for follow-up, including the appointment of a special representative, must be considered.

64. **Ms. Banks** (New Zealand) said that New Zealand had established a ministerial-level team on family violence which was committed to a whole-of-government response to the problem. The ministerial team was advised by a task force for action on violence within families. In addition, the Working for Families package was a significant government initiative designed to reduce family poverty which would benefit around 75 per cent of all New Zealand families with children. Early intervention to support vulnerable young children and their families was a priority for the Government, which was implementing prevention strategies through a policy called the Early Years approach. The aim was to build a comprehensive system of early intervention services for all children under the age of six, especially vulnerable children and their families, including their extended families.

65. **Ms. Tchitanava** (Georgia) said that the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated into Georgia's national legislation. The Ministries of Education and Health, Labour and Social Care, along with the local authorities and municipalities, all cooperated closely with the international organizations on issues relating to the rights of children, education, literacy, human rights education, children's health, parent education, vaccination and other humanitarian affairs.

66. A difficult economic situation and conflict in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had made it difficult for the Government to address all the needs of young people. In that regard, the support of the international community with respect to training and assistance projects aimed at advancing child and maternal health care, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, reducing infant and child mortality and malnutrition, and improving education had been especially valuable. Along with environmental issues and the empowerment of women, health care and education were the main targets of the Georgian Government as it strove to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, Georgia's health care scores had improved since 2000, thanks to the joint efforts of the Government and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, immunization rates had increased to 70-80 per cent for the most common diseases.

67. A bill had been submitted to Parliament that would make domestic violence a criminal offence. In 2005, anti-trafficking legislation had been adopted, and a plan for reducing the number of institutionalized children had been approved. The Government was also trying to resolve the problem of refugee and internally displaced children, as well as children living in conflict zones. The separatist regime in Abkhazia prohibited Georgian children from studying in their mother tongue. While the central authorities, in cooperation with international donor organizations, were able to provide special rehabilitation, education and leisure programmes to those children and to some from the conflict zones, the vast majority of them were still beyond the coverage of those programmes.

68. Georgia had high rates of enrolment for both genders in adult literacy programmes and primary, secondary and higher education. In 2005, the Georgian Parliament had passed a law on general education which provided the framework for an inclusive educational system. She expressed concern over the blatant discrimination against Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians studying in both Georgia and the Russian Federation, including the recent abrupt termination by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation of the studies and contracts of 70 students and 25 teachers, respectively, at a Russian school in Tbilisi; and the establishment by the Russian Ministry of the Interior of a list of names of all ethnic Georgian schoolchildren to be used by the police for exercising special controls over such children and their families. Furthermore, Georgian students in various Russian universities were persecuted by police during lectures and detained without any specific charges.

69. The Russian authorities had also started profiling Georgian citizens, who were humiliated, including by publicly being checked for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS before being deported on cargo planes in the full glare of the media spotlight. In that regard, children were often left alone in hospitals without their parents for several hours. Those who were attempting to involve children in conflicts between governments were violating the most sanctified values of mankind. In a world where the efforts of the international community were directed

towards strengthening peace and security, promoting human rights, addressing development and providing children with a safe and dignified childhood, those kinds of actions were unacceptable.

70. **Mr. Solorzano** (Nicaragua) said it was essential that Member States implement the recommendations contained in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children by taking concrete steps to protect children against violence. The problems affecting children in Central America, such as youth gangs, drugs and crime had their roots in the ill-treatment children suffered and in the poverty that afflicted the region. That negative situation hindered normal human development, weakened the family unit, affected human dignity and prevented the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction.

71. His Government was deeply concerned and acknowledged its responsibility for tackling the problem of violence against children, including through legislation. Civil society and non-governmental organizations could also play a role but he underscored the critical need for national efforts to be supported by regional and international partners in order to make available resources for local capacity-building to meet that challenge.

72. The recommendations contained in the report of the independent expert, including the appointment of a special representative, provided a sound basis for efforts to eliminate violence against children. The problem however would be implementation and he reiterated that the international community must be prepared to work together and to allocate adequate resources to meeting the goal of eliminating violence against children.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.